

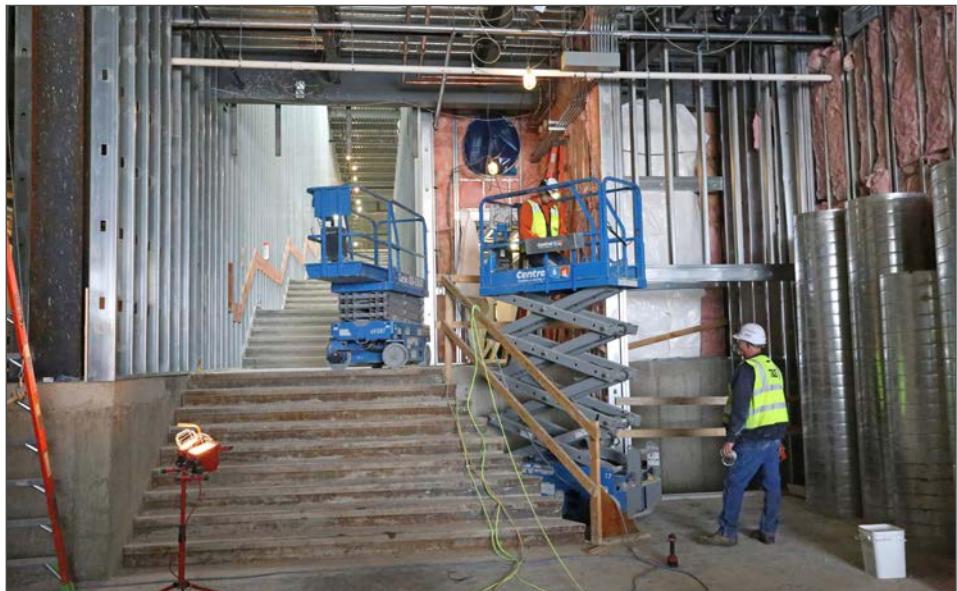
## Changes Ahead at the Montana Historical Society

Construction of the Montana Heritage Center in Helena is slightly ahead of schedule, which means the Montana Historical Society has ramped up the anticipated temporary closures. We're finding new ways to fulfill the public's needs while having limited access to our artifacts and documents.

Many items are available for viewing online. They include more than 40,000 artifacts, nine exhibits, one million-plus pages of newspapers, 100,000 books, letters, lesson plans, photographs, and much more. Look online at [mths.mt.gov](http://mths.mt.gov) or call 406/444-2694 and our staff will help you find what you're seeking.

MTHS Director Molly Kruckenberg noted that while she would rather remain open during construction, the staff must inventory, pack, and store the priceless art, artifacts, and documents to protect them. The galleries will be used for storage and office space.

The Library & Archives reference room closed on Dec. 15 and will remain shuttered for about two years



*Construction workers have dried in the addition, and are working on the interior of the Montana Heritage Center. This grand staircase leads from the north entrance to the central lobby.*

while we pack items, move out of our offices, and reopen on the main floor of our renovated building.

The final galleries closed in January 2023, as construction workers moved into the 70-year-old Veterans and Pioneers Building to begin the renovations. They started in the basement

with utility upgrades; later they'll tackle the second and third floors, before wrapping up on the first floor.

"Our staff will remain in our offices as long as possible, but clearly the construction renovations will be

**"Changes" (cont. on p. 3)**

## Six Feet Under, Without a Shovel

**BY MELISSA MUNSON, PROGRAM OFFICER AT THE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**  
Offer archaeologists an opportunity to see what's below the soil surface without breaking ground, and expect to see them jump with excitement.

Recently, Jon Axline, a historian for the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), invited

staff from the MTHS State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to a training demonstration using MDT's new Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) unit.

The radar uses electromagnetic signals to produce an image of ground disturbances at various depths. MDT

purchased the \$36,000 unit about a year ago to help detect voids behind retaining walls or find utilities before drilling. SHPO archaeologists were interested in learning how the equip-

**"Six Feet Under" (cont. on p. 3)**

## Tribal Relations



The Montana Historical Society embraces the perspectives of the tribes of Montana and holds their input on our history in high regard. For several decades we have relied on consultation with tribal members for exhibit development, artifact identification, and knowledge of proper care of Native American objects in our collections. From reviewing curriculums and publications to advising on our exhibits, we reach out to tribal elders and cultural experts to assist us with interpreting Montana's past.

Recently we have called on tribal representatives to help us with the Montana Heritage Center. A Tribal Stakeholders Group, with a representative from each reservation in Montana, offers their insights into a wide range of MTHS activities, including the design of the building, landscaping, artifact selection, and storytelling. This group is proving invaluable. Adding their perspec-

tives and understanding of our history and culture have provided new dimension and depth to our exhibit designs.

Even as we seek to add their expertise to the Montana Heritage Center, we acknowledge that some stories need to be told by the tribes themselves. Recently the Society's Board of Trustees approved repatriating the taxidermy mount of the famed Big Medicine white bison to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

Big Medicine was raised on the Bison Range at Moiese and came to the Society following his death in 1959. He has been on display since 1961 and has been viewed by thousands of visitors. Earlier this year, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes formally requested that he be returned, noting that Big Medicine is revered by the tribes for his healing and protective powers, and deep spiritual lessons conveyed

in ceremonies and songs.

In consideration of the cultural significance of Big Medicine to the Salish, Kootenai, and Pend d'Oreille tribes, our Trustees unanimously approved the request, with the strong support of our staff. The Society will retain physical possession of Big Medicine until the CSKT has a safe environment in which to display him.

The preservation of history is important to all cultures. As we at the Montana Historical Society work to tell the multifaceted story of Montana's past using the artifacts that we hold in trust, it is equally important to understand which artifacts and stories may rightfully belong elsewhere. Big Medicine will physically return to his homeland, but his story will continue to be told at the Society as we work with all of Montana's tribes to share the many perspectives of our past. ▼▼▼

## "Changes" (cont. from p. 1)

impactful," Kruckenberg said. "We're trying to minimize the disruption, but some staff will temporarily work from home and we're also seeking alternative office space for others.

"We apologize for any hardships that creates," she added, "but know that when we reopen in early 2025, our expanded and renovated facility will be worth the temporary disruption in services."

The MTHS also is seeking a temporary space in which to relocate the museum store. Until then, it will remain open in its current location at 225 No. Roberts in Helena.

## "Six Feet Under" (cont. from p. 1)

ment might help uncover buried foundations, artifacts, and human remains without having to break ground and risk damage to important resources.

With GPR, archaeologists can make informed decisions on where to dig and how deep.

SHPO has six archaeologists, five of whom were on-site on a sunny afternoon in October. Jessica Bush, Laura Evilsizer, Laura Marsh, Kyler Mozell, and John Boughton serve different roles at SHPO, but each was curious to see the GPR technology in action.

MDT geotechnical engineers Nick Jaynes and Alex Haag created a grid across a grassy suburban open space in Helena. Haag made methodical passes with what looks like a lawnmower, monitoring readings on a small screen, seeking a subsurface pattern that might indicate evidence of a graveyard.

The training site was in a subdivision near the former Lewis and Clark County Hospital and poor farm that opened in the late 1800s. It housed the elderly, the disabled, and orphaned or abandoned children. Poor farm

people can shop online anytime at [app.mt.gov/shop/mhsstore/](http://app.mt.gov/shop/mhsstore/)

The popular public programs will be held at the Lewis and Clark Library at 120 So. Last Chance Gulch in Helena and will change to a 6:30 p.m. start on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month to better accommodate the public. The program schedule is at [mths.mt.gov](http://mths.mt.gov)

Upcoming programs include "A Survivor's Account of the Custer Creek Train Wreck," by Bill Jones on Jan. 12. His father survived and photographed the 1938 tragedy, which was the worst rail disaster in Montana history. On Jan. 26, Jennifer Hill will discuss her book *Birthing the West: Mothers and*

residents raised livestock and grew vegetables. When they died, the county paid for a pine box and a burial.

The poor farm operated until the 1950s. Almost 600 yards to the southeast is the old county hospital, which operated until 1984 and now houses the Florence Crittenton Home. The hospital building and surrounding area are part of the Lewis and Clark County Hospital Historic District, which was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2002.

Scanning the site with GPR confirmed cemetery borders and gravesite locations laid out in a grid. Aside from a few depressions where pine boxes may have collapsed, no surface signs exist of the graves, perimeter fencing, or wagon roads and walking paths.

Much remains unknown about those buried in the poor farm cemetery. A plot plan for the two-acre parcel shows lots for 640 graves, and the historical record suggests that 379 burials may be located on the site or its immediate vicinity. Helena and Lewis and Clark County historic preservation officer Pam Attardo has been conducting research to learn more about the individuals possibly laid to rest here.

*Midwives in the Rockies and Plains.*

The Original Governor's Mansion will maintain its winter operating schedule, with free tours offered Saturdays on the hour from noon until 3 p.m., as well as by appointment, at 304 No. Ewing St. in Helena. The OGM will return to its normal summer schedule in 2023. The grand Queen Anne mansion, constructed in 1888, served as the official governor's residence between 1913 and 1959.

The MTHS will offer guided tours of the Montana State Capitol to school groups Tuesday through Thursday during the legislative session. Self-guided tour booklets are available for individuals at the Capitol. ▼▼▼



Technology like GPR is one of many tools used during archaeological surveys. In Montana, only 6 percent of 94 million acres have been surveyed for cultural resources. Expanding that surveyed acreage is one of SHPO's five-year-plan goals for statewide preservation. SHPO maintains the Montana Antiquities Database, which holds almost 66,000 records for historic and archaeological sites across the state.

To learn more about SHPO's archaeology program, visit [mhs.mt.gov/Shpo/index4](http://mhs.mt.gov/Shpo/index4)

# Montana History Teacher of the Year Announced



Great Falls teacher Eric Chaon was honored Nov. 9 in the State Capitol as the Montana History Teacher of the Year for 2021-2022 as part of the Montana Statehood Centennial Bell

ceremony.

Nominated by a co-worker and a student, Chaon was chosen by a panel of Montana history advocates. Chaon is the Social Studies Department head at Great Falls High School and the 33rd award winner.

"It's rewarding to have students who recognize and are thankful to have you as a teacher," Chaon said at the ceremony.

A Great Falls native, Chaon is a 2006 graduate of Great Falls High School and a 2010 graduate of Montana State University in Bozeman. He holds a bachelor of science degree in secondary education, and a master of education degree in curriculum and instruction.

Chaon taught middle school and high school social studies in Augusta, Montana, from 2011 to 2013, and world history and Montana history

at Great Falls High School since 2013.

Montana Historical Society Trustee Norma Ashby Smith was the award coordinator and mistress of ceremonies. She said Chaon will receive a plaque and \$4,500 from the Montana Television Network, the Montana History Foundation, and the Sons and Daughters of Montana Pioneers. Other partners are the Montana Historical Society and the 1889 Coffee House in Helena.

An additional gift of \$100 in gold Sacajawea coins from Judy Wohlf from Woodland, California, is given to the student who writes the letter of support for the winning teacher. Mike Collins, president of the Sons and Daughters of Montana Pioneers, and his wife Connie gave a gold Sacajawea dollar to each student who accompanied Chaon to the Helena awards ceremony. ▼▼▼

## MHC Hits New Fundraising Total

Montana Heritage Center supporters recently brought the fundraising total to \$38 million.

The private gifts, which help provide funding for Montana Heritage Center construction and exhibits, have far surpassed the initial goals.

"We are so thankful to the many people who support the future home of the Montana Historical Society. Reaching \$38 million is both amazing and humbling," said Ginny Sullivan, MTHS development officer.

A significant portion of the fundraising is attributed to \$25 million from the Washington Family Foundation. The gift was a game changer when costs soared due to inflation and supply chain issues.

The building construction bud-

get is stable, yet the MTHS team continues to reach out to donors to reinstate interpretive enhancements that were removed during the cost/benefit analysis done by the contractor and the MTHS. These include an amphitheater, a powwow-style arbor at the east entrance, and multimedia enhancements in the North Entrance and Homeland Gallery.

Recent gifts include \$5 million from an anonymous donor, \$250,000 from Howard Jelinek, \$25,000 from Valley Bank of Helena, and \$25,000 from Rockwood Brown.

"Our goal is to raise another \$8 million to \$10 million by early 2025," said Molly Kruckenberg, MTHS director. "We are confident we can meet this goal because the Montana Heritage

Center is going to be a world-class destination that all Montanans and our supporters can be deeply proud of." ▼▼▼

### ABOUT US

The Society Star is published quarterly by the Montana Historical Society as a benefit of membership.

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- ▼ Editor: Eve Byron

[mhs.mt.gov](http://mhs.mt.gov)



## History Buffs Enjoy 49th Annual Conference

The Montana Historical Society's annual history conference in Red Lodge sold out this year, with attendees filling the beds, restaurants, and shops of the town that was still struggling through financial and physical devastation after severe spring flooding.

The conference was held Sept. 29 through Oct. 1, with the theme of **To Wonderland and Beyond**, commemorating the 150th anniversary of the establishment of Yellowstone National Park. Events mainly took place at the Rock Creek Resort, with about 200 attendees.

"We realized early on that the spring floods would have a significant impact on tourism in Red Lodge, so we were thrilled to be able to give the community an economic boost," said MTHS Director Molly Kruckenberg. "The Rock Creek Resort, the Carbon County Historical Society and Museum, the Buses of Yellowstone Preservation Trust, and the Roman Theater all provided great venues for events, and we look forward to returning in the future."

Dr. Shane Doyle, an educational and cultural consultant from the Crow



Agency in southwest Montana, was the conference's keynote speaker. He discussed the background of the All-Nations Teepee Village, near Madison Junction, created by Indigenous people to commemorate the 150th birthday of the park. The installation recognizes their presence in the region for the past 12,000 years and includes their history in the future.

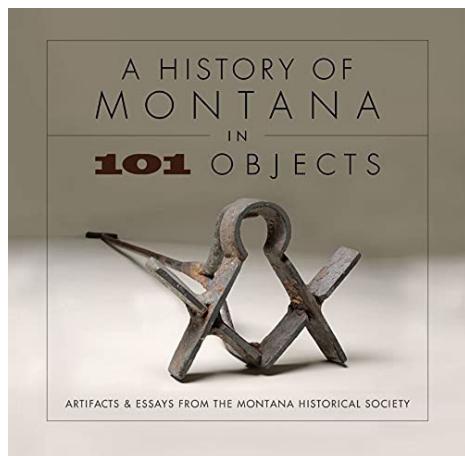
"We thank everyone who participated in the conference, as well as those who helped us pull it off," said Christine Brown, the MTHS historian who organized the conference. "We're already gearing up for the 50th annual conference next year in Helena and hope to see you there!" ▼▼▼

## 101 Objects Wins Big!

*A History of Montana in 101 Objects* is the winner of two 2022 High Plains Book Awards. The MTHS Press published the book in 2021.

The book, which tells the story of Montana through 101 objects, took first place in the nonfiction category as well as Best in Show for the Big Sky category. Kirby Lambert, a former MTHS Outreach and Interpretation program manager, created the chapter introductions to essays written by more than a dozen historians. MTHS photographer Tom Ferris took the photos, and Diane Hall designed the cover and interior.

It can be ordered through the MTHS bookstore at [mhs.mt.gov/store](https://mhs.mt.gov/store) or call 406/444-2890. ▼▼▼



## Call for Proposals for 50th Conference

The Montana Historical Society invites session proposals for **Building on the Past: The 50th Annual Montana History Conference**. The conference will be held Sept. 28-30, 2023, in Helena at the Delta Hotel.

MTHS will look back on 49 years of our gatherings to talk about Montana history. We welcome proposals on any topic relating to Montana history but will give special consideration to 20th-century history, including the past 50 years, as well as sessions on Indigenous history and identity; environmental history; Montana in film and literature; race, gender, and gender identity; technological change; past/present parallels; and natural resource management. The conference committee invites proposals for interview, panel, and roundtable discussions, as well as traditional lecture sessions designed to engage a general audience. The deadline to submit proposals is March 5, 2023.

Although we greatly appreciate the time and effort a presentation at the history conference entails, we are unable to pay for speakers' travel or lodging expenses. However, we do provide speakers with a complimentary, full-conference registration, including all meals and events.

To submit a proposal or to watch or hear recordings of previous history conferences, visit [bit.ly/2023MTHSHistoryConference](https://bit.ly/2023MTHSHistoryConference). For other questions, contact Christine Brown, conference organizer, at 406/444-1687 or [christine.brown@mt.gov](mailto:christine.brown@mt.gov). ▼▼▼

# Collection Book Traces Montana History

Collector and historian Thomas Minckler spent 50 years gathering 19th- and early 20th-century letters and documents, vintage photographs, rare books, and paintings. He's sharing those collections in his new book *Montana: A Paper Trail*.

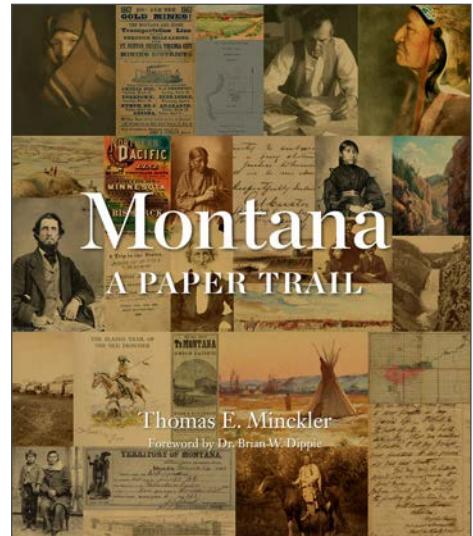
Veteran Western Americana specialist Nathaniel Des Marais wrote of the 10,000-plus items: "Make no mistake, this is the finest gathering of Montana source material ever brought together."

The wide-ranging collection includes the sole image of James Kipp (1788-1880), the iconic builder of upper Missouri River fur trading posts. It also includes photos of

the legendary Ferdinand Hayden's Yellowstone Expedition in 1871 and outstanding unpublished material of Granville Stuart, Teddy Blue Abbott, C. M. Russell, Thomas Meagher, Father Pierre-Jean De Smet, and George Armstrong Custer.

*Montana: A Paper Trail* was published by the Montana Historical Society Press. It can be ordered through the MTHS bookstore at [mhs.mt.gov/store/](https://mhs.mt.gov/store/) or call 406/444-2890. 440 pages and 449 illustrations.

Additional book signings and readings will be held around Montana and the nation. For more information, contact Corby Skinner at [corby.skinner@gmail.com](mailto:corby.skinner@gmail.com) ▼▼▼



## New Faces

### Patty Davis

Helena native Patty Davis is the new part-time photograph technician for the photo archives program. Davis grew up in Helena and earned her bachelor's degree in business management and finance from Carroll College. She has been married for almost 40 years to her high school sweetheart, and has one daughter and two granddaughters.



and chasing her two grandchildren, Davis decided to return to work part-time. She loves history and hopes to bring enthusiasm, curiosity, and dedication to the photo archives position.

### Mary Ann George

Mary Ann George is the new administrative associate for the museum program. George grew up in Queens, New York, and has lived in Helena for the past 30-plus years. She has a master's degree from St. John's University in elementary education and has been married for 30 years, with two grown sons.



George came to the MTHS after working for 17 years at Helena College as the library technician. She is excited for the challenges and new experiences that the move and new Heritage Center will bring.

She is an avid pickleball player and also enjoys hiking, kayaking, cross-country skiing, reading, and binge-watching PBS dramas.

### Emily McKeever

Emily McKeever is the new Montana Historical Society administrator. She takes over from Denise King, who retired in December after 16 years at MTHS.



McKeever grew up on her family farm north of Fort Benton, Montana, where her great-grandparents homesteaded. She is thrilled to join MTHS and unite her love for Montana with the 26 years of finance, accounting, and government experience she has gained throughout her career and apply her CPA skills to further MTHS's mission.

McKeever graduated cum laude

"New Faces" (cont. on p. 7)

## "New Faces" (cont. from p. 6)

with a bachelor's degree in business administration from Gonzaga University in Spokane. She spent six years as an auditor with KPMG, LLP, but returned to Montana in 2002 to be closer to family. She worked for three large statewide nonprofits during the next 14-plus years in Missoula and Helena, where McKeever gained valuable experience in federal and state grant management, budgeting, financial reporting, and working with boards. In 2017, she started her career with the State of Montana.

She is a graduate of Leadership Montana, a yearlong program that strengthens leadership skills and deepens awareness of issues affecting Montana. She looks forward to working alongside fellow Leadership Montana graduate and MTHS Director Molly Kruckenberg.

McKeever has two elementary-age children. She volunteers as a lead singer at her local church and is treasurer for her children's elementary school parent-teacher council. McKeever also likes working out at the gym and hiking the mountains surrounding Helena. She loves to offer a home-cooked meal to her family and friends, and often tries out new recipes on them, mostly to their enjoyment!

### Jennifer Simmons

Helena native Jennifer Simmons is the new full-time fiscal officer for the administrative program. She grew up in Helena, home-schooled by her parents. Simmons graduated from the Helena College of Technology in 2001 with



an associate of applied science degree in accounting. She is married to her best friend of 17 years and also has a fur-baby named Samson, an 8-year-old golden retriever.

Simmons worked for more than 22 years in the financial office for the legislative branch. She is happy to have made the short trek across the street to find a new home in the museum that she remembers wandering around in wonderment as a child.

In her spare time, Simmons enjoys playing with sugar in all its forms — baking cupcakes, pies, old-fashioned desserts, and Christmas cookies to share with family and friends. She is passionate about the beauty of Montana and enjoys spending time outdoors with family, hiking and camping in the mountains. She loves to try to capture the beautiful scenery in art form, using graphite pencils, chalks, and acrylic paints. ▼▼▼

## Governor Recognizes SHPO Staff Excellence

Gov. Greg Gianforte has recognized SHPO compliance officer Laura Evilsizer's hard work with his Governor's Awards for Excellence.

She was honored for accommodating expedited reviews under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act amid the governor's 2021 Emergency Drought Declaration.

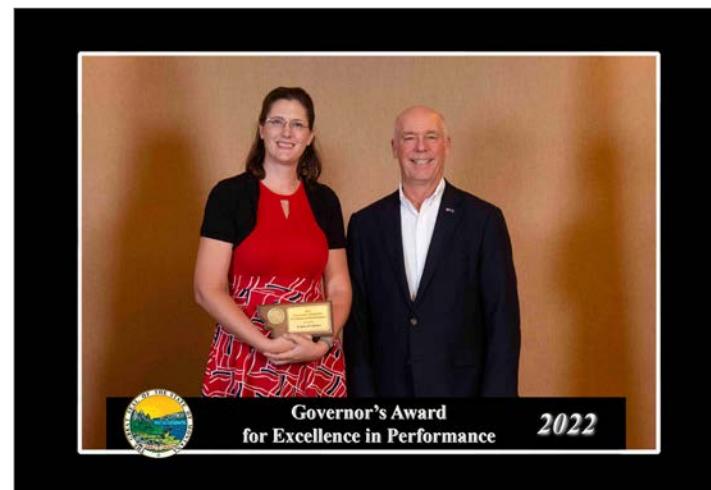
The declaration released millions of federal dollars for Montana's agricultural producers to establish and augment water wells and pipelines necessary to sustain their livelihoods. The USDA Farm Services Administration programs for drought-stricken farmers and ranchers require a process that entitles SHPO to a 30-day review turnaround period.

Evilsizer completed more than 500 project reviews within 48 hours

after submission. The bulk of these, 343 undertakings, arrived at SHPO in a 90-day period.

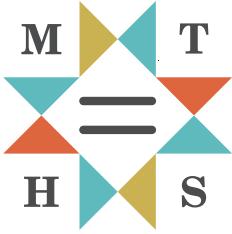
"When we see folks providing exceptional service to the people of Montana, we want to recognize them," Gianforte said. "I'm grateful for their service."

Evilsizer's expedited reviews came as SHPO experienced an unprecedented surge in Section 106 workload beginning in 2020 and continuing through 2022. Increases have been mostly due to large-scale landscape projects proposed by the



U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, the federal Great American Outdoors Act, and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

While Evilsizer conducted the bulk of reviews, staffers Jessica Bush and Eric Newcombe provided valuable support. ▼▼▼



# MONTANA

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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**Big Sky~Big History**

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## From the Museum Store

### NEW STORE HOURS

Beginning in January 2023, the Museum Store will be open for in-store shopping from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. We are located just inside the main entrance at 225 No. Roberts St. in Helena.

Please stop in to shop our great selection Montana books and gifts, call us at 406-444-2890, or shop online anytime at <https://mths.mt.gov/>

Keep warm this winter with our Xplorer Map Fleece Blankets! Choose from Montana, Glacier, or Yellowstone map designs.

